



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Minutes of July 22, 2004

1:00 p.m. Greensboro, NC

Plaza Level Conference Room

Melvin Municipal Office Building

(Greensboro City Hall)

ATTENDANCE

Jim Westmoreland	TCC Chair	Frank Wyatt	Greensboro Engineering & Inspections
Tyler Meyer	GDOT/MPO	Kimberly Hinton	NCDOT, TPB
Jeff Sovich	GDOT/MPO	Ken Taffer	NCDOT, Division 7
Craig McKinney	GDOT/MPO	Mike Cowan	NCDOT, Division 7
Peggy Holland	GDOT/MPO	Connie Morgan	NCDOT, Roadside Environmental Unit
Chris Spencer	GDOT	Jeff Lackey	NCDOT, Roadside Environmental Unit
Adam Fischer	GDOT	Charles Brummitt	Piedmont Land Conservancy
Bill Ruska	Greensboro Planning	Robert Gordon	Town of Summerfield
Heidi Galanti	Greensboro Planning	Ray Combs	Town of Oak Ridge
Libby James	GTA	Amy Dominello	Greensboro <i>News & Record</i>

Jim Westmoreland called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m.

Action Items

1. Approve Minutes of May 27, 2004

Frank Wyatt moved for approval of the minutes. Bill Ruska seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as prepared.

2. PART 04-10 MTIP Transit Amendment

Jeff Sovich advised that the MTIP amendment presented makes three key changes to PART's Transfer Facility project, TD-4723A. First, this project is currently programmed for fiscal year 2004, however schedule for this project has shifted to 2005. In order for PART to apply to FTA for funding reimbursement, the MTIP must be amended to reflect the new project schedule. Second, PART has

received a discretionary allocation of \$1,093,510 in Section 5309 funds by NCDOT. This amendment adds this funding and corresponding state and local match amounts to the project. This represents an increase in funding from \$1.8 million to \$3.2 million for this project. Finally, this amendment revises the project description to clarify the nature of this facility, and the specific work tasks that will be performed with the allocated funds. The requested action is to recommend that the TAC adopt the amendment as presented.

Frank Wyatt moved to recommend that the TAC adopt the amendment as presented; Mike Cowan seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC adopt the amendment as presented.

3. Congestion Management System

Jeff Sovich advised that in January, the TAC adopted a Detailed CMS Outline, which fulfilled interim FHWA guidelines for new Transportation Management Area's, provided that a full CMS is adopted no later than the next LRTP update. In the May MPO meeting, the TAC heard an in-depth presentation of the findings of the CMS consultant team, Martin-Alexiou-Bryson. MAB has completed the final CMS Report, which is now available on the MPO website. The CMS establishes policies and procedures for ensuring that the capacity of existing transportation infrastructure is maximized before resources are devoted to constructing new facilities. The requested action is to recommend that the TAC adopt the Final Congestion Management System Report as presented.

Tyler Meyer moved to recommend that the TAC adopt the Final CMS Report as presented; Mike Cowan seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the TAC adopt the Final CMS Report as presented.

Business / Potential Action Items

1. Future Meeting Schedule

Jeff Sovich advised that the current MPO meeting schedule has presented time conflicts for some TAC members. Accordingly, staff have prepared several potential options for a revised schedule of meeting dates and times, which were then presented to the TAC. The TAC reviewed their calendars and determined that for August through December 2004, the regular meeting date would be shifted to the fourth Wednesday of each month, and that the TAC will meet from 1:45 to 3:45 pm, except in the months of November and December, when the meeting date would be shifted to the third Wednesday, to avoid conflicts with the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. The August 25 TAC meeting will be held in the J. Douglas Galyon Depot, following the publicity event for the statewide 511 traveler information system.

2. Piedmont Greenway

Charles Brummitt advised that among the roles of the Piedmont Land Conservancy is the protection of urban green space, which which has inspired the Conservancy's current efforts to plan for and implement the proposed Piedmont Greenway. During the late 1990s, the Conservancy initiated a capital campaign to raise funds for planning work on the Piedmont Greenway project. The Conservancy contracted with the firm Greenways Incorporated to conduct this work. Greenways Incorporated held a series of public meetings in the course of developing the Piedmont Greenway master plan, which was completed in the spring of 2003. Since that time, the Conservancy has been working with a technical committee

comprised of representatives from Greensboro, Guilford County, Kernersville, Winston-Salem, Forsyth County, and NCDOT. Representatives of the City of High Point have also joined the committee recently, and investigations are under way as to how High Point may be connected into this project. The Conservancy's current mission is to generate support for the Piedmont Greenway concept, as it has been developed.

The Greenway would be a regional linear park, connecting Winston-Salem, Kernersville, and Greensboro. This facility would be an investment in the Triad's future quality of life. The benefits of the Greenway would include economic, transportation, public health, environmental, and regional cooperation aspects that would extend to all sectors of the regional population. The Greenway would build upon the region's already strong foundation of trails by connecting the Owl's Roost Trail, the Bicentennial Greenway, Triad Park, and Salem Lake Trail.

The Piedmont Triad is currently at a competitive crossroads, due to the national recession, as well as the recent losses of many jobs locally. The Triad now needs to compete for a different types of jobs that are less traditional and more creativity-dependent than we have focused on in the past. These jobs will require workers with different skillsets and different expectations for amenities in their community. In the Triad, the available green space is limited and becoming more so. The Piedmont Greenway presents an opportunity to help preserve some of this green space, and as always, the sooner planning and construction on such a project begins, the less expensive it will be in the end.

The vision and goals that the technical committee have developed include providing: recreation that is close to home; alternative transportation connections; opportunities for appreciating nature; connections to area historic sites; opportunities for celebrating community; and local tax base enhancement. A wide variety of survey data supports the value that communities place on parks, green space, and outdoor recreation, as well as the range of substantial benefits that such amenities provide.

Considerable work remains to be done in order to make the Piedmont Greenway a reality. The estimated cost of construction, excluding land acquisition, is \$270,000 per mile. In addition to the funding needs, implementing the Greenway will involve planning coordination among the regional partners, selection of a final route, and getting past the hurdle of constructing the first several links. The Conservancy expects that the Greenway project would be completed mile by mile over a period of ten years or more, but ultimately, the success of this project will depend on collaboration. Over the next several months, we would like for the Greensboro TAC to consider adopting a resolution of support for the Piedmont Greenway.

Jim Westmoreland recommended that MPO support should be indicated at the project endorsement and funding level.

Tyler Meyer noted that the project is included in the Proposed 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan.

3. Noise Wall Landscaping

Tyler Meyer advised that this item is being presented to follow-up on previous discussions about landscaping in conjunction with Urban Loop and the I-40 widening project, and in particular how NCDOT's landscaping policies and plans can be applied to the noise walls along these facilities.

Connie Morgan advised that she and Jeff Lackey have been developing a landscaping concept that covers both the Urban Loop and the I-40 widening project. NCDOT has adopted a philosophy of

installing sustainable landscapes. NCDOT defines a sustainable landscape as a zone of random width, located behind the "clean-up" mowing limits, that combines hardscapes and colorful plantings within an area that is managed to control undesirable species but minimize maintenance. The intent of this policy is to produce roadside landscaping that is more environmentally friendly and more economical.

The density and formality of sustainable landscapes vary with different treatment levels and roadway configurations, but a range of typical cross-sections and styles has been developed to illustrate the effects of sustainable landscape installation. Sustainable landscapes can also be designed to create a theme, providing a coherent and continuous appearance within a corridor. An example of this concept would apply a "four seasons" theme to the I-40 corridor in Greensboro, to coordinate with Four Seasons Town Centre. This example would use plants that showcase all four seasons, combined with hardscape elements such as stone walls and split-rail fencing, to add year-round visual appeal. Such themes could be developed for, and applied to, both the I-40 corridor and the Urban Loop, although some segments of the I-40 corridor present constraints due to the limited plantable area, high heat re-radiation by pavement and noisewalls, obstruction of sunlight by noisewalls, safety considerations for maintenance crews.

Jim Westmoreland advised that in previous meetings, the questions have been raised as to the cost of upgrading the standard noisewalls along the Urban Loop, to brick noisewalls. NCDOT has estimated that the cost of upgrading the currently planned noisewalls to brick would be approximately \$1.8 million. NCDOT will work with local governments to construct noisewalls in the style that they prefer, provided that the local government bears any costs in excess of the standard treatment. However, the functionality of the noisewalls in reducing the incidence of freeway traffic noise on surrounding properties is the same, regardless of the aesthetic treatment. By contrast, funding for landscaping installation on TIP projects is established by a formula as 1% of the total project cost. That amount is then distributed over the length of the project, based on input from the local MPO. NCDOT sometimes devotes more landscaping resources as appropriate on a project by project basis. Accordingly, the most cost-effective option for improving the visual character of the noisewalls along the I-40 widening project and the Urban Loop will be to utilize the allocated landscaping funds to install landscaping treatments that will partly screen the noisewalls and reduce the monotonous appearance of the standard noisewall style.

4. Guilford County Burlington Road Resolution

Tyler Meyer advised that the Guilford County Board of Commissioners recently adopted a resolution requesting consideration by NCDOT and the City of Greensboro for possible future improvements to the Burlington Road / East Market Street corridor. The types of improvements mentioned in the resolution include emphasizing the corridor's "gateway" function, upgrades to more efficiently serve the traffic needs of the area, enhanced signage, and land use amenities, such as continuous curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. The resolution has been distributed to the City and to NCDOT, and is being brought to your attention today in the context of consideration for future transportation priorities.

Jim Westmoreland advised that this request would need to be examined through a feasibility study, which is the first step in the project development process. A feasibility study would identify the purpose and need for such improvements, the recommended cross-section and other features, and the cost and time required for the project. Then the project would become eligible for potential future funding prioritization by the MPO and NCDOT and potentially the City. This is the sort of project that could be done as a future transportation bond project. Because of the scope of the improvements requested and the level of study and funding that would be needed, this would not be a near-term project.

5. Airport Area Transportation Study Priorities

Tyler Meyer advised that in May, 2003, the TAC adopted amendments to the Thoroughfare Plan based on the recommendations of the Airport Area Transportation Study. Since these amendments were adopted, there have been continuing discussions about land use planning in the airport area, including potential siting of the future Triad Park. There has also been further consideration, through the long range transportation plan process, of concerns expressed regarding the proposed alignments of these facilities. Finally, regional discussions have continued, regarding priorities, facility location, and other issues. During the Thoroughfare Plan amendment process the TAC indicated its intent for these corridors to move into the project development process as soon as possible, to determine the feasibility of, and likely timeline for, implementation.

MPO staff have reviewed the proposed corridors and have assigned a priority order based solely on technical considerations. For instance, from the standpoint of maintaining adequate traffic flow, the extension of the re-located Bryan Boulevard to NC 68 would appear to hold the highest priority. However, the purpose of this discussion is to provide an opportunity for the TCC to give your feedback on this prioritization, and indicate which of these facilities should move forward first.

Mike Cowan stated that the Transportation Planning Branch will be investigating the current I-73 / I-74 proposed route. They will be inquiring with FHWA as to whether the turn from the NC 68 / US 220 connector onto the extended Bryan Boulevard would be feasible. This is a question that has not been fully explored before because the current I-73 / I-74 corridor was developed before the extended Bryan Boulevard was proposed as a potential segment of that corridor.

6. 2030 LRTP Next Steps

Tyler Meyer advised that the public comment period for the Draft 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan runs through August 11. The full draft is available on the LRTP web page. A final public involvement meeting is scheduled for July 29. Following this meeting, MPO staff will compile, review, and analyze the comments submitted. The draft will be revised as appropriate to address issues raised in comments by NCDOT, the public, and other entities. The final 2030 LRTP will then be presented to the TAC for adoption in August. The LRTP will then be reviewed by the federal agencies, and should become effective on October 1, 2004.

7. MPO Strategic Reports

Air Quality Update - The Triad region is anticipated to be designated as an air quality non-attainment area for fine particulate matter in November. The possibility remains that the designation may not become official, however the final ruling has not been made. The EPA guidelines for the new PM 2.5 regulation, which will explain how to comply with the designation, have not yet been released. The effective date of the designation will be one year from the Federal Register notice, at which time, an update to the Conformity Analysis and LRTP will be needed to demonstrate that the area can reasonably be expected to comply with the standard.

Priority Needs Session - The MPO Priority Needs Session was held at the NCDOT headquarters building in Raleigh on June 1. The conversation among MPO and Program Development representatives was helpful in clarifying the status of various projects. Funding issues and how federal fund availability will affect projects remain uncertain until re-authorization of the surface transportation bill is resolved.

Project Planning Activities – Tyler Meyer advised that four technical feasibility studies had recently been completed to NCDOT standards by the MPO. This is the first step in the NCDOT project development process. For these to move forward as state or federal projects, the next step will be entry into the environmental document phase once funding has been identified.

- The Horsepen Creek Road study found that the proposed widening is both needed and feasible. The next step is to seek federal and state funding commitments and approval to begin an environmental document.
- The Summit Avenue study found that the section north of Bryan Park Road should be incorporated into project R-4707, the US 29 interchange at Reedy Fork Parkway. This recommendation has been accepted by NCDOT, which is currently revising the R-4707 project limits accordingly. The section south of Bryan Park Road will need further evaluation with the new travel demand model (in 2005) to demonstrate sufficient projected traffic volumes to justify the proposed widening improvements.
- The Cone Boulevard Extension and Urban Loop Interchange Study, and the Fleming Road / Lewiston Road Connector and Urban Loop Interchange Study found that the process for establishing projects for these improvements should be deferred until after Urban Loop construction. Because these two interchanges have been made eligible for the state Highway Trust Fund, the study recommends that the City of Greensboro work with the NCDOT Design Unit to develop designs for the Urban Loop at these locations that would permit cost-feasible interchange construction in the future. The City could likely construct the connector roadways prior to Loop construction, but this option is not recommended at this time.

Upcoming Events - There will be a final public input meeting next Thursday, July 29 at 6:00 pm in City Council Chambers. This meeting will provide the public with an opportunity to review the draft 2030 LRTP, ask questions, and give their feedback on the plan. The public comment period runs through August 11.

Other Items

1. TCC Member Report

Mike Cowan advised that the I-40 widening project is nearly complete and that crews are working on finishing details including overhead signs and lighting.

The TCC adjourned at 2:43 p.m.